STATISTICAL SUMMARY

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS, U. S. D. A.

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Weather Last Month Slows Crops

Farm work and progress of crops were slowed by bad March weather in most of the country. Much of the advanced progress made possible by mild winter was offset. Numerous areas report backwardness of a few days to a week or more. But more fall plowing was done than usual and mechanization enables farmers to move fast once they get started. Little concern is felt yet.

Winter Wheat Estimate Down

Winter wheat prospects are down 121 million bushels from the December estimate. Estimate April 1 was 764 million bushels compared with 885 million in December. Continued dryness, aphid infestation and acreage abandonment in the Great Plains, main hindrances.

Spring Rains Needed in Central Plains

For the present, soil moisture is mostly adequate in Central Plains. But spring rains will be needed for continued development.

Plentiful Precipitation in Large Areas of the Nation

Snow and rain were heavier than usual in March across the northern third of the country. Rainfall was heavy also in the area surrounding the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, in the southeastern coastal strip, and southernmost parts of Louisiana and Texas. No measurable rain fell in the lower Colorado River Valley of Arizona and California and very little fell in the southern Great Plains wheat area.

Irrigation Water Short in Spots, Plentiful Elsewhere

Irrigation water supplies are satisfactory to above normal in most of the northern and central parts of the western mountain area, but are short in New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada. Areas dependent upon spring runoff and wells may experience shortages during the season.

U. S. Pasture Condition Slightly Below Average

Pasture condition, at 80, was 1 point below average for April 1 and 5 points below the high level of a year ago. Poorest condition is in the dry Southwest. In the South, though slower than usual, pastures were still supplying relatively good feed. As meadows in the North emerge from dormancy some heaving has occurred where snow cover was inadequate. Storms in western range areas during March required heavy use of hay and feeds.

Feed Grain Stocks Near Record

Feed grain tonnage on farms is second-largest of record, also in quantity per animal unit. Biggest portion is the 1.6 billion bushels of corn--exceeded only in '49. Oats stocks of 481 million bushels are smaller than year ago, but above average. Barley stocks of 71 million bushels are a little below average. Disappearance of 28½ million tons of feed grains from farms since January 1 reflects liberal feeding.

Farm Wheat Stocks Down From Average

The 199.2 million bushels of wheat stocks on farms April 1 are down from average by 8 percent. Total year ago was 246 million bushels. Movement of 1,014 million bushels from farms since harvest is less than in the same period of the past 3 years.

Rye Stocks on Farms Near Low Record

Except for '46 and '47, rye stocks on farms April 1 are the smallest in 11 years. Total is about 3.3 million bushels. This compares with 5.5 million year ago and 4.6 million average.

Soybeans on Farms Above Average--Down From Last Year

The 44 million bushels of soybeans in farm storage April 1 was 9 million bushels above the April 1 average, but down 8 million bushels from a year ago. A third of the total farm stocks--nearly 15 million bushels--are in Illinois, the heaviest producer of soybeans, 8 million bushels are in Iowa; 6.3 million in Indiana; and 1 million bushels in North Carolina.

Rye Condition Better Than Average

Rye condition April 1, at 85 percent of normal, was a little better than average but compares with 89 percent of normal year ago.

Oats and Barley Wintered Well--Oats Acreage May Be Cut

Fall-sown oats and barley appear to have wintered well in most areas. Some fields were damaged by standing water in parts of the South. In Oklahoma "greenbugs" have caused serious damage to both fall-sown and spring oats. In Texas, rust and dry soil conditions are reducing yield prospects as oats are in the boot and heading. Fall barley was severely damaged in Nebraska. Seeding of oats was mostly completed in Kansas with some reseeding in blown-out fields. But in areas further north and east seeding was delayed...some possibility the full intended acreage would not be seeded.

Progress Made in Rice Seeding

Rice seeding made good progress in Texas and Louisiana, will start soon in California, but has been delayed in Arkansas by wet fields.

Early Potatoes In Above Average Condition

Condition of early potatoes in the 10 Southern States and California is reported at 81 percent, 3 points above average. Condition year ago, 85. Only in Oklahoma, Texas and California is the condition below average. In 2 States, North Carolina and Arkansas, condition is reported higher than year ago. In Florida, harvest of the winter crop is about over.

Record Milk Production

Milk production last month exceeded that of any other March of record. Milk cow numbers slightly larger than a year ago. Production per cow continued at a record rate. Both the highest percentage of cows milked and heaviest feeding of grain and concentrates of record were contributing factors. March production was nearly 10 billion pounds compared with 9.6 billions in March last year, 9.4 billions average. Production first three months this year was 27.7 billion pounds; year ago, 26.7 billion; average, 26 billion pounds.

March Eggs Total Up From Year Ago

Egg production also was relatively large. The number of layers was larger, but the rate of lay was slightly less than a year ago. Total laid in March was 6.4 billion eggs; year ago, 6.1 billion; 10-year average for March 5.9 billion. First 3 months, 16.8 billion compared with 15.6 billion year ago and 13.9 billion average for the period.

PARITY PRICES FOR FARM PRODUCTS AND ACTUAL PRICES RECEIVED

COMMODITY AND UNIT	ACTUAL PRICE		PARITY PRICE
	Feb. 15 1950	March 15 1950	March 15 1950
Wheat, bu. ....dol.	1.93	1.98	2.14
Corn, bu. ....dol.	1.16	1.19	1.55
Peanuts, lb. .... ct.	10.6	10.5	11.6
Cotton, lb. .... ct.	27.50	28.05	30.01
Potatoes, bu. ....dol.	1.33	1.32	1.68
Hogs, 100 lb. ....dol.	16.60	16.10	18.80
Beef cattle, 100 lb. ....dol.	20.40	21.00	17.00
Veal calves, 100 lb. ....dol.	24.60	24.40	19.00
Lambs, 100 lb. ....dol.	22.80	23.70	18.70
Butterfat, lb. .... ct.	1/ 61.6	1/ 61.5	69.2
Milk, wholesale, 100 lb. ....dol.	1/ 3.85	1/ 2/ 3.85	4.32
Chickens, live, lb. .... ct.	21.8	23.8	28.5
Eggs, doz. .... ct.	1/ 32.5	1/ 35.9	49.4

1/ Adjusted for seasonal variation.
2/ Preliminary

6 Percent More Layers--Increases in all Regions

Nation's flocks in March averaged 380,792,000 layers, up 6 percent from year ago. Numbers were up from last year by 9 percent in the West, 8 percent in the North Atlantic, 7 percent in the West North Central, 6 percent in the East North Central, 5 percent in the South Central and 4 percent in the South Atlantic States.

Fifth More Young Chickens Than Average

Chicks and young chickens of this year's hatching on farms are estimated at 225.8 million, largest April 1 number since 1944--8 percent more than a year ago and 20 percent above average.

Wide Range of Prices for Eggs

Results of an egg-marketing study to appear soon in the Marketing and Transportation Situation indicate that prices received by farmers for eggs in the North Central States in '48 varied as much as 15 cents per dozen when sold to different types of buyers. And eggs graded for size--most of which were sold to hatcheries and direct to consumers--brought 7 cents a dozen above the average price for ungraded eggs. Farmers with flocks of 400 or more hens got the highest average price. They managed to sell to the higher-paying outlets.

Turkeys Selling Lower--Large Storage Stocks

Turkey prices averaged farmers 31.6 cents a pound liveweight in March, compared with 42.9 cents a year earlier. U. S. storage stocks of turkeys on March 1 were 128 million pounds, a decline of 9 million pounds from the preceding month. This compares with 51 million pounds in storage a year ago and the 5-year average of 89 million pounds.

Poultry Feeding Less Favorable Than Last Year

Egg-feed, chicken-feed and turkey-feed price relationships are much less favorable than a year ago. The mid-March cost of the U. S. poultry ration was $3.40, compared with $3.47 a year ago.

Freezes Damage Peach Crop

Freezing temperatures April 6 damaged peaches in Georgia, Virginia and South Carolina. And there have been bad freezes since. Prospects on April 1 indicated a short crop of peaches in Washington, Idaho and Oregon. Many orchards, especially in Washington, reported a 100-percent bud kill.

All Citrus Total Down 3 Percent From Last Year

Combined production of all citrus crops--oranges, tangerines, grapefruit and lemons--totals 155 million boxes. Total is down 3 percent from last year, 18 percent from 2 years ago, and 19 percent from the record large '46-47 tonnage.

More Oranges and Tangerines Than Last Year

Oranges and tangerines are estimated at 106.2 million boxes compared with 104 million last year and 97.1 million for the 10-year average production.

Fewer Grapefruit

The 37 million boxes of grapefruit now estimated compares with 45.5 million last year and 50.5 million 10-year average.

More Lemons Than Last Year, but Below Average

Lemons estimated at 11.5 million boxes will exceed the 9.9 million produced last year. 10-year average production has been 13.2 million boxes.

Farmers' Prices Steadier Last Month

Prices received by farmers in March remained unchanged. Index at mid-March was 237 compared with high of 306 reached in January '48. Prices averaged higher for fruit, cotton, grain, meat animals, and poultry and eggs, but were offset by decreases in prices of truck crops and dairy products. Prices paid by farmers--including interest, taxes and wage rates--rose 2 points to 250. High (in July '48) was 262. While prices received are steady now, they are down from high by 69 points compared with a decline of only 12 points in the index of prices paid, interest, taxes and wage rates.

Steady Prices Apt to Continue All Spring

Prices received by farmers are expected to remain steady through most of the spring. But livestock production and crops' total are likely to be large (with average weather and indicated acreage). And large supplies, with exports diminishing would bring lower prices later this year.

Farmers' Receipts Hold Close to Last Year

Farmers' cash receipts from marketings first 4 months will total about 7.3 billion dollars, down 5 percent from a year ago. Prices average lower but volume sold is larger. Livestock and products will total about 4.5 billion dollars, down 6 percent from the same period of last year; receipts from crops, about 2.8 billions, down slightly from a year ago; with lower prices only partly offset by a larger volume.

Business Activity and Purchasing Power High

First quarter's auto production and industrial activity were appreciably higher than a year ago. With coal mining at full-scale, steel output which dropped to 74 percent of capacity in early March rose above 95 later in the month. Consumer incomes remain high. Retail sales, first 2 months, up a little from year ago. Auto sales up sharply. Sales of home furnishings also up, reflecting record residential building. Wearing apparel sales first 2 months are off but food store sales continue strong--at same level as year ago.

Spring Lamb Crop Shows First Gain in 9 Years

Early spring lamb crop was 2 percent larger this year than last. The increase is the first in 9 years and represents the higher proportion of ewes lambing before March 1 in the Southeastern States and Missouri.

Hog Prices Off $10 From Year Ago

Chicago hog prices in March were down about $4 per hundred pounds from year earlier and more than $10 below the high level reached in March '47. Based on the favorable hog-corn price ratio, expected to continue this spring and summer, and on the indicated corn acreage, a small increase appears likely in the number of sows to farrow fall pigs. But population growth and lighter slaughter weights of hogs probably will keep supplies of pork per person in the spring and summer of '51 about the same as those of this year.

Smaller Feeding Margin Expected on Beef Cattle

Price gain, or feeding margin, on cattle bought as stockers or feeders this March and sold next fall will probably be smaller than in recent years. Prices of stocker and feeder cattle in March were up to the '48 record high for the month, and prices of slaughter steers for sale next fall are not expected to be as high this year as last.

Farm Employment Nearly Same as Year Ago

Farm employment in March was down a little from a year earlier, although up seasonally from February. Number at work on farms was 9,374 thousand. Compares with 9,444 thousand at work year ago. Decrease was about equally divided between hired workers and farm family workers.

Total Civilian Workers Same as Year Ago

Total U. S. civilian employment in March (Census) was 57.6 million, up a little from the 57 million at work in February. Employment a year ago was 57.6 million persons. Unemployed in March totaled 4.1 million compared with 4.7 million in February. Year ago in March 3.2 million workers were without jobs.

CURRENT INDEXES FOR AGRICULTURE

INDEX NUMBERS	BASE PERIOD	March 1950
Prices received by farmers	1910-14=100	237
Prices paid by farmers, interest, taxes and farm wage rates	1910-14=100	250
Parity ratio	1910-14=100	95
Wholesale prices of food	1910-14=100	1/ 241
Retail prices of food	1910-14=100	2/ 251
Farm wage rates	1910-14=100	3/ 427
Weekly factory earnings	1910-14=100	2/ 489

PRODUCTION COMPARISONS	Jan.-March 1949	Jan.-March 1950
Milk, (Bil. lb.)	26.7	27.7
Eggs, (Bil.)	15.6	16.8
Beef, (Dr. wt., mil. lb.)	4/ 1132	4/ 1102
Lamb & Mutton (Dr. wt., mil. lb.)	4/ 103	4/ 94
Pork & Lard (Mil. lb.)	4/ 1830	4/ 1858
All meats (Dr. wt., mil. lb.)	4/ 3166	4/ 3149

1/ Week ended nearest 15th of the month.
2/ February figure.
3/ April 1 adjusted for seasonal variation.
4/ January-February under Federal inspection.